

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

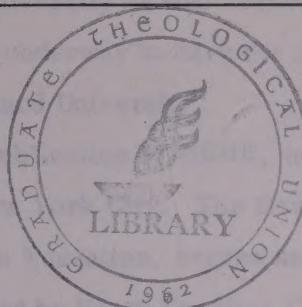
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May 8, 1980CONVOCATION ON MINISTRIESTO BLACKS HELD

by E. Nathaniel Porter

Episcopal Chaplain at Howard University

DURHAM, N.C. -- Ministries to Blacks in Higher Education (MBHE) an ecumenical, interracial organization designed to meet the unique needs of persons living in and ministering to the black community, met at North Carolina Central University here, in mid-April.

The organization had its genesis out of the social fermentation of the late 1960s when a handful of campus ministers came together in Greensboro, N.C., in order to develop strategies of ministering the Gospel to blacks in higher education. Since that time, MBHE has been meeting annually in various east coast cities, but basically in the south where the largest concentration of predominantly black colleges is found.

The Rev. Perry Smith, campus minister to blacks at the University of Maryland, was elected chairman of the MBHE board of directors for the next three years. Smith previously held the position of chairman of the finance committee. The Episcopal Diocese of Washington helps fund the ministry at that university.

Some specific objectives of MBHE as stated in the bylaws are:

- 1) To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all of its fullness;
- 2) To aid in the development of effective campus ministries for blacks in higher education and to sensitize these ministries to the black liberation struggle; and
- 3) To provide resources and skills in the development of workshops, seminars and continuing education opportunities geared to deal with specific problems and issues faced by those ministering to blacks in higher education.

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Attending the first meeting of MBHE in 1969 was the Rev. Richard Hick -- presently Methodist chaplain to Howard University -- who served as executive director of MBHE until this past October. Plans are underway to have the next annual convocation of MBHE meet in Washington, D.C., at Howard University.

Toward Wholeness, the official publication of MBHE, is issued bi-annually and distributed from 132 West 31st Street, New York City. The Rev. Robert A. Mayo, Episcopalian staff member of United Ministries in Education, serves as editor.

The Durham gathering was greeted by North Carolina Central University President Albert Whiting, himself an Episcopalian. He challenged members to help keep traditionally predominantly black educational institutions alive and healthy as they provide truly unique resources for the American culture.

The theme of the conference was, "Visions for the 80s: Higher Education and the Church," which may be summed up in a quote by M. W. Howard in The Witness: "The Black Church which teaches that upward class mobility, the acquisition of things, and electoral politics are the best signs of hope against the lingering ravages of slavery is a Black Church which is doomed to be judged by its own sermons."

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